December 21, 2012

Dear School Facility Users:

We are all united in our grief and outpouring of sympathy for the Newtown, Connecticut community after last week's tragedy. While schools remain a safe haven for children, we are reminded once again how important it is to remain vigilant.

Community users are contacting CUPF to express their concerns and inquire about security guidelines. As background, in 2000 the ICB and MCPS took a long, hard look at how to balance security and building access and formed a security task force. As a result of the task force, CUPF initiated the mandatory training program for new users during which copies of photo IDs and emergency contact information are collected, funded installation of security gates, security cameras, and 58 all-call paging lines in schools. In addition, groups were required to hire MCPS security staff when hosting events with large groups. Although the hiring of security staff to supplement the Building Services Worker presence during community use was considered, passing on an estimated $5 million cost to our users was viewed as cost prohibitive. School and county staff have access to real-time database information on who has been granted a permit and for what purpose.

During the regular school day, the school's principal takes the lead in implementing an appropriate emergency plan. Childcare providers and others in the school during the day should touch base with the principal regarding any site specific concerns or issues with the safety of the building.

However, outside school hours, due to the transitional nature of CUPF's program and noting that at any point in time, diverse combinations of users might be in a school facility, it is critical that individual groups invest in developing their own safety plans.

Community groups are reminded to:

- Report suspicious activities or persons on or near school grounds, i.e., parking lots, playground area, etc.
- Call 911 and take whatever steps are necessary to ensure the safety of their group if they are involved or believe they are at risk during an emergency situation
- Learn about potential hazards through http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/oemhs/hazards/index.html
- Follow the direction of any public safety or school official that may be taking the lead during an incident
- Update or create emergency plans that cover a variety of contingencies (evacuation, shelter in place/lockdown) and periodically have drills to ensure that participants know what to do. For more information visit http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/OEMHS/plan/community_preparedness.html
- Sign-up for emergency text alerts at https://alert.montgomerycountymd.gov/register.php
- Attend all your group's activities if you are the responsible individual listed on the permit. If you are unable to attend, be sure to designate another individual as your group's contact person should the need arise
- Contact CUPF staff if you would like to hire security coverage for your event

255 Rockville Pike, Suite 201 · Rockville, Maryland 20850
3-1-1 for General Information – 240-777-2725 Main # – TTY 1-800-735-2258 – FAX 240-777-2707
www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cupf
cupf@montgomerycountymd.gov

Additional resources:

MCPS has posted a number of tips and links on their security webpage
http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/security/.

Montgomery County Police Department non-emergency line 301-279-8000
Online reporting form http://www.mymcpnews.com/
Text-a-Tip at 274637 (CRIMES)

Montgomery County Office of Homeland Security
http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/oemhs/resourcelibrary/index.html

As a reminder if you "See Something - Say Something"

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Ginny Gong, Director
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